

March 12, 2009

Chairman Steinbeisser, Committee Members:

My name is Carol Morris, M-o-r-r-i-s and I live here in Helena. I've been a horse person all my life and am strongly opposed to the building of a horse slaughter facility here, or anywhere else for that matter. I'd like to focus on how the idea of a horse slaughter plant seems to call up the "disposable" mentality of our society.

What's not **"disposable"** in our world today. Be it a washing machine, a broken bicycle, a computer screen, a litter of puppies **or**, as in the issue before you today, horses, who for many reasons find themselves in **somebody's way**.

Our society looks at certain human beings the same way. For nearly 40 years I have worked with programs addressing the needs of individuals often seen by the general public as **"disposable"**; those with social difficulties, and mental and physical illnesses or disabilities. I've been involved in pleading for money and programs to bring these individuals into the mainstream of American life where they belong rather than **"disposing"** of them in institutions, back rooms in their families' homes or even worse, left to fend for themselves on the fringes of polite society. Things are somewhat better today because of changes in the laws and **most importantly a change in the way we view our fellow human beings**.

This same attitude of **"disposability"** has long been present in the way we treat animals. Yet in the past few years we have seen creativity, commitment and

change in approach begin to successfully address pet overpopulation in literally hundreds of programs designed to educate the public, provide assistance in crises situations; and securing the support and commitment of breeders, owners and animal lovers. Rather than “**disposing**” of these animals in unbelievable numbers, the focus has been changed to much more humane and appropriate alternatives.

And now, we are faced here in Montana with a proposal to build a plant in this beautiful state to slaughter “**disposable**” horses. And how did they become “**disposable**”? Basically because the person or persons responsible for them decided to walk away from that responsibility. Through no fault of their own, these animals find themselves stuck in kill pens, auctioneer rings with kill buyers hanging on the fence to take them to slaughter for a few measly bucks, or in rare cases actually abandoned. They are often judged as useless because they aren’t quite as young and strong as they used to be, or don’t have just the right conformation to carry on the “breed”. I wonder how many of us in this room could meet such criteria to earn the right to go on living??

Is there a real problem with unwanted horses? Of course there is. A very large problem around the country and here in Montana. But if the only method the people of Montana can come up with to solve this problem is to scar our amazing state with a slaughterhouse for horses, we are not the people I thought we were. Let’s put our creativity and commitment into finding real solutions rather than just “**disposing**” of our responsibility to these animals. I believe by

defeating this bill, you will be agreeing that this is not the way we want to be known for handling our responsibilities to this special animal here in Montana.

Thank you very much for your time, I urge you to vote NO on HB418.